CHAPTER **18**

Health Education: Concepts, Professions, and Issues

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Questions

- **In your own K-12 Health Education courses, what were the five key topic areas you learned about? What areas were not included? Why do you think these were not covered?**
- **In a small group, discuss the following question: Why does sex education in schools remain such a "hot-button" issue for parents, school administrators, and the public?**
- **Describe a situation around a health behavior you were conflicted about because of peer pressure (e.g., doing drugs, drinking alcohol)**

Objectives

- Describe the key components of health education programming.
- Explain the multiple dimensions of health.
- Explain the relationship between health, well-being, and “not being sick.”
- Describe the status of K-12 health education programming.
- Describe the health behavior trends of U.S. adolescents.

Health Defined

The state of well-being and balance within and among multiple dimensions of health, including but not limited to physical, mental and emotional, and social dimensions

- **Health is multidimensional and exists across multiple levels.**
- **Various definitions and understandings of health exist.**
- **Cultural considerations shape individual views of health and well-being.**

Health Education

- **No one definition of health education is universally accepted.**
- **Health education encompasses the ways in which individuals learn about and use their learning to maintain or improve health.**
- **It has an intentional focus on the health of individuals, in communities, and across the globe.**
- **Public health intersects with school health, though each has a unique focus and emphasis.**

School Health Education Defined

“A planned, sequential, comprehensive and relevant set of learning experiences, taught within the academic subject of health education by a licensed health educator, that address the impact of individuals’ attitudes, beliefs, values and actions on health and well-being (within and among multiple dimensions), and strategies for health promotion to maintain or enhance health” (Benes & Alperin, 2022).

Need for Health Education

Health education can support efforts to do the following:

- **Address health inequities**
- **Address youth risk and protective factors**
- **Affect health across multiple dimensions/aspects of life**
- **Improve the health of the nation**
- **Increase health literacy**
- **Support and improve health behaviors of youth**
- **Provide a progression of learning across age**

Benefits of Health Education

- **Health education improves health behaviors and health outcomes.**
- **Positive outcomes have been found in programs that focus on specific health-related topics (e.g., social media and relationships).**
- **It often offers small effect sizes or short-term benefits.**
- **Studies examining three commercial curricula show that comprehensive programs can lead to positive behavior changes and increases in skill performance.**

(continued)

Benefits of Health Education *(continued)*

- **Development of NHES skills can help health AND academic goals (e.g., decision-making and accessing valid information).**
- **A positive relationship exists between health and academic outcomes.**
- **It supports health literacy and helps develop skills that can support health-promoting lifestyles and academic success.**
- **It can support the development of engaged, productive citizens.**

Effective Health Education

- **Mirrors the CDC's characteristics of effective health education**
- **Employs a skill-based focused approach**
- **Integrates culturally responsive teaching practices**
- **Integrates a strengths-based paradigm**
- **Uses a trauma-informed approach and integrates trauma-sensitive strategies**

Skills-Based Health Education Defined

“Planned, sequential, comprehensive, and relevant set of learning experiences implemented through socioecological and sociocultural perspectives and participatory methods, in order to support the development of skills, attitudes and functional knowledge needed to maintain, enhance or promote health and well-being of self and others across multiple dimensions of wellness” (Benes & Alperin, 2022).

Core Tenets

- **Uses participatory methods to engage students and promote knowledge retention**
- **Develops skills of the NHES for application in real-world settings**
- **Supports exploration of beliefs and attitudes toward health and health behavior**
- **Includes functional information that builds a knowledge base for health**

Effective Health Education: Curriculum

- Has a written scope and sequence
- Data-driven programming
- Developmentally appropriate
- Includes accurate and up-to-date information
- Includes use of formative and summative assessments
- Summative assessments should be authentic in nature

Effective Health Education: Instruction

- **Health educator serves as a guide on the side**
- **Provides learning experiences in which students can engage with the content and each other**
- **Focus is on skill practice and meaningful feedback**
- **Active, hands-on learning experiences**
- **Is student-centered**

Effective Health Education: Skill Development

FOCUS ON

Skill Development Model

1. *Skill introduction:* Provide a definition for the skill, discuss the relevance of the skill for students, and describe the educational outcomes (what they will be able to do at the end of the unit).
2. *Skill cues:* Present the critical elements of the skill (or skill cues).
3. *Modeling:* Show the skill being applied effectively (by peers, people similar to students, or someone with whom they can connect), and highlight application of critical elements.
4. *Practice and feedback:* Have students practice in authentic situations with feedback.
5. *Assessment and transfer:* Provide summative assessment and feedback, and reinforce real-life application, relevance, and transfer outside of the classroom.

Adapted from S. Benes and H. Alperin, *The Essentials of Teaching Health Education*, 2nd ed. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2022), 263.

Role of a Health Educator

- **Uses need-based data to develop the program**
- **Plans curriculum and interventions to meet the needs of target audience**
- **Implements strategies in meaningful ways**
- **Assesses effectiveness and transfer to settings beyond the learning environment**
- **Communicates results to key stakeholders**

Current Issues Facing Health Education

- **Lack of health education in schools**
- **Perceptions of health education and its value**
- **Integrating social justice into health education**

Activity

- **Over a seven-day period, track your own daily caloric intake of the following: caffeine (e.g., coffee, chocolate lattes), energy drinks (e.g., 5-hour energy, Bang), alcohol (e.g., beer, liquor), snacks (e.g., chips, crackers), fast food (e.g., burgers and fries), and sugary drinks (e.g., sodas, juices).**

- **Describe your family's history of chronic disease on both your sides of the family (e.g., CVD, high cholesterol levels, blood pressure, colon cancer, lung cancer).**

Summary

- **School-based health education can play a vital role in supporting the health outcomes of young people.**
- **School-based health education must become a focus of schools and communities.**
- **Principles of effective health education must be the cornerstone of health education programs.**

- **Tasks/Assignments:**
- **Next Class:**